

## HIPPONAX

- 1 O Clazomenians, Bupalus has killed . . .  
2-2a She was clad in a Coraxian shift,  
[but bare] as far as the Sindian Gap.  
3 He called on Maia's son, Cyllene's sultan.\*  
3a 'Hermes, watchdog-choker—"Candaules", to put it  
in Lydian—  
comrade of thieves, come and help me pull this  
rope.'  
4-4a Cicon the son of Pandales, the ill-starred mullah  
with his bay wreath . . . this Amythaonid\*  
with nothing propitious to foretell.  
5 To cleanse the town and be pelted with  
fig-branches.\*  
6 . . . in winter, pelting him and whipping him  
with fig-branches and squills, just like a scapegoat.  
7 He must be adopted as our scapegoat.  
8 and place within his reach  
figs, barley-cake, and cheese, like scapegoats eat.  
9 They've long been waiting for them,  
open-mouthed,  
armed with fig-branches like they have for  
scapegoats.  
10 . . . till he's starved dry; let him be led a scapegoat  
and given seven lashes on the willy.  
12 With these words gulling the good folk of  
Erythrae,  
the mother-fucker Bupalus with Ārētē,  
preparing to withdraw the unspeakable skin (?)  
. . .  
13 They were drinking from a pail—she had no cup,  
the slave had fallen on to it and smashed it.

14                   And from the pail they drank;  
now he, and now Ārētē drank a toast.

15                   Why have you made your home  
with the wretch Bupalus?

16                   And I at dusk  
went to Ārētē under a lucky heron  
and booked in for the night.

17   For Ārētē,  
as she bent over for me towards the lamp . . .  
19 What birthcord-snipper wiped and cleaned you up,  
you blighted creature, as you squirmed and  
mewled?

20 Thinking to whack the first bloke with his stick.

21 He asks half a dollar for pecking at his cock.

22 Knocking her nose out, and the wick as well.

23 Upon these men shall fall a chilling ague.

25 'Artemis damn you!' 'And Apollo damn *you*!'

26-26a For one of them, steadily dining on  
tunny and gentleman's relish every day,  
just like some eunuch kept at Lampsacus,  
ate up the allotment; so I have to dig  
the rocky hillside, munching modestly  
on a few figs and barley cobs—slaves' feed—  
not champing hare and francolin, not I,  
not tarting pancakes up with sesame,  
or dipping waffles into honeycombs.

27 And if they catch the wogs, they sell them off,  
the Phrygians to Miletus to grind corn . . .

28 Shoulder-deep-slackjaw Mimnes, another time  
don't paint a snake along a trireme's hull  
that's running back from prow to tillerman.  
That'll be ruinous, you berk, you nerd,  
and a bad omen for the tillerman,  
if a snake comes and bites him on the shin!

29a His belly burbling like a pan of soup.

- 30 I think it's wrong that Critias the Chian  
was seized as an adulterer down there  
in the women's chapel.
- 32+34 Hermes, dear Hermes, Maia's son, Cyllenian,  
hear thou my prayer, for I am bloody frozen,  
my teeth are chattering . . .  
Grant Hipponax a cloak and a nice tunic  
and some nice sandals and nice fur boots,  
and sixty gold sovereigns to balance me up . . .  
For thou hast never granted me a cloak  
thick in the winter to cure me of the shivers,  
nor hast thou wrapped my feet in thick fur boots  
to stop my chilblains bursting.
- 35 I'll say, 'Cyllenian Hermes, Maia's son . . .'  
36 And Wealth—he's all too blind—he's never come  
to my house, never said, 'Hipponax, here's  
three thousand silver drachmas, and a heap  
of other stuff besides.' No, he's a dimwit.
- 37 . . . said they should pelt and stone Hipponax.
- 38 Zeus, father Zeus, Olympian gods' sultan,  
wherefore hast thou not given me gold, silver?
- 39 I'll see my suffering soul go to damnation  
if you don't send a peck of barley soonest  
so I can use the groats to make myself  
a posset I can take for my wretched state.
- 40 O Malis, bless me: grant, I pray, that having  
a numbskull master, I don't get a beating.
- 41 And now he threatens to make me a worthless  
fellow
- 42 . . . the Smyrna road, straight on  
through Lydia, past the tomb of Attales  
and Gyges' gravestone and Sesostris' column  
and Tos' memorial, sultan at Mytalis,  
turning your paunch towards the setting sun.
- 44 And if you like, I'll let you have him cheap.
- 47 With him await the dawn of white-robed day;  
then you'll salaam Phlyesian Hermes, then . . .

- 48 The dark fig, sister of the vine.  
50 He/she lived behind the town in the Smyrna  
district,  
between Roughside and Scabby Edge.  
51 Then, smearing along his keel with caulking  
wax . . .  
52 But you're holding your cloak wrapped round:  
selling a plover?  
53 But straightway yattering at one another . . .  
54 A screech-owl, page and herald of the dead.  
56 Piercing the jar-lid with a thin pipette.  
57 Dripping, like a strainer  
dripping dead wine.  
58 And sweet rose-unguent, and a pan of wheat.  
59 He sits and warms his blisters by the embers  
incessantly.  
60 I wore a wreath of plums and mint.  
61 . . . croaked like a jay in the jakes.  
62 . . . naked on a bed of straw.  
63 And Myson,\* whom Apollo  
declared to be the sensiblest man alive.  
65 . . . eagerly off the stern-tip into the sea.  
66 and doesn't bite afterwards, like a tricky dog.  
67 People who've drunk neat wine don't care a damn.  
68 Two days in a woman's life give greatest pleasure:  
those of her wedding and her funeral.  
70 . . . (she) grunting . . .  
this godforsaken wretch, who used to poke  
his sleeping mother's sea-anemone . . .  
[May the gods strike him] blind . . . and crippled.  
72 Beside his chariot and white Thracian foals  
. . . hard by the walls of Ilios  
Rhesus\* was despoiled, the Aeneans' sultan.  
73 And he pissed blood and shat a stream of gall,  
while I . . .

All the teeth in my jaws have been dislodged;  
I go about . . . I fear . . .

78 . . . he used bad language and . . .  
. . . warm ashes . . .  
but went not in where there was flame or fire.  
Throughout the month of . . . he would go,  
[chewing] dung-beetles, to the Cabiri's shrine  
and [make an offering of] a sprat or two.  
Then, going home, he dined on mulberries,  
and with the juice he dyed this fellow\* red  
around the nose, spat on it thrice, and . . .  
shagged off at last . . .

79 . . . this foolishness . . . hitting his jaw  
. . . made them out of (into?) wax . . .  
. . . and splatter-shat upon . . .  
. . . with gold-gleaming wand . . . near the  
bedpost.

Hermes, escorting him to Hipponax's  
[smuggled] the sneak-thief past the wretched dog  
[that] hisses like a viper [when friends come.]  
. . . Hipponax, taking thought at night  
. . . and devised . . .  
. . . he pondered. To the Appeaser  
[the mulla]h [sacrificed] . . . a fly . . .  
Then with three witnesses he went at once  
to where the bastard has his vino-shop,  
and found a fellow sweeping out the place,  
using a clump of thorn for lack of a broom.

84 On the floor . . . undressing . . .  
we bit and kissed . . .  
keeping a look-out through the doors . . .  
in case . . . should catch us naked . . .  
She was eagerly . . .  
while I was fucking . . .  
pulling out to the tip, like skinning a sausage,  
saying to hell with Bupalus . . .  
Straightway she [pushed] me out, and I [brimmed  
over.]

Now after our exertions we had [rest,]

I . . . like a wrinkled sail . . .

92 She spoke in Lydian:\* *'Faskat ikrol'l'* —

in Arsish, 'Up the arse . . .',

and [pulling down] my ball by the bal[d patch]

she thrashed me with a fig-branch, like [a

scapegoat]

fast[ened in] the stocks. And there [I was]

under two torments: on one side the branch

[was killing] me, descending from above,

[my arse on the other] spattering me with shit.

The passage stank; and dung-beetles came buzzing  
after the smell, over fifty of them:

some attacked, while others [whet] their te[eth],

and others fell upon the Arsenal doors . . .

104 . . . bending back his fingers . . .

. . . as he squirmed about

. . . I jumped on his belly

. . . lest he should think to curse me

. . . gnashed my teeth and bashed

. . . with legs apart

. . . I took off my cloak

. . . rubbing the dust off my feet

. . . I barred the door

. . . covering up the fire

. . . and lined my nostrils

with perfume . . . as used by Croesus.

. . . to trip his feet.

Slipping, he implored the seven-leaved cabbage

he used to offer potted to Pandora

at the Thargelia,\* before the scapegoat.

. . . his forehead and his sides.

114a May someone pluck his arsehole, soften up . . .

114c An interprandial pooper.

115 drifting about on the wave.

At Salmydessos\* may topknotted Thracian braves

welcome him naked ashore,

and may he there endure a multitude of woes,  
eating the bread of a slave.

I hope they find him frozen stiff, and from the  
brine

covered in seaweed and slime,  
his teeth a-chatter, like a dog from lack of strength  
lying with face in the sand  
right by the water-line, under the breaking waves.

That's what I'd like to see done  
to my betrayer who has trampled on his oaths,  
who was my friend in the past.

117 the cloak . . .

creel . . . you like  
to sit nearby. Hipponax here's aware of this  
better than anyone else,  
and Ariphantus knows. I envy those that have  
never yet seen you around,  
you dirty stinking thief. Well, you can quarrel with  
potter Aeschylides now:  
he's been and carried off your household goods,  
and laid  
all your dishonesty bare.

118 O Sannus, as you wear a godless nose  
and can't control your appetite  
and have a ravening beak just like a heron's

lend me your ear . . .

I want to give you some advice.

Your arms are wasted, and your neck;  
and yet you eat up. Careful you don't get  
the gripes . . .

First strip and do your movements; Cicon will  
pipe you the tune of Codalus.

118a And all his household property's unharmed.

119 If only I could get a girl both beautiful and slender.

120-1 Take my mantle, lads, and let me punch old  
Bupalus in the eye.

I've got two right hands, you know; I hit the target  
when I punch.

122 Once more I'll have to sue the bastard Metrotimus.  
123 and get it better judged than Bias of Priene.  
124 and not suck on a Lebedos dried fig from  
Kamandolos.

125 . . . eating bread of Cyprian Amathous wheat.

127 . . . and the daughter of Zeus, Cybebe, and  
Thracian Bendis.

128 Tell me, O Muse,\* of Eurymedontiades the  
Charybdis,  
him of the gastric carvers, who eats in irregular  
fashion:  
tell how amid the shingle the wretch will  
wretchedly perish  
by the vote of the people beside the limitless  
seashore.

129 How did he come to Bendova's isle?\*

129a Why do you feed me on gamblers?

155 drank it up like a lizard in an alley.

177 Blest Hermes, who both knowest how to wake the  
sleeper  
and how to put to sleep the wakeful . . .

## Hipponax

- 3 *Maia's son, Cyllene's sultan*: Hermes, the protecting god of thieves. Cyllene is the mountain in Arcadia where he was born. 'Sultan' translates a Lydian word that Hipponax uses a number of times for comic-bombastic effect.
- 4a *Amythaonid*: i.e. a claimed descendant of the mythical seer Melampous, the son of Amythaon.
- 5 *pelted with fig-branches*: this and the five following fragments allude to an Ionian 'scapegoat' ritual in which, to purify the city, some friendless wretch was first given a good meal, then subjected to various indignities, driven out of the town, and (perhaps) put to death.
- 63 *Myson*: in response to an enquiry as to who was the wisest of men, the Delphic oracle unexpectedly named this obscure person. He was later counted as one of the Seven Sages.
- 72 *Rhesus*: a Thracian king who arrived at a late stage in the Trojan War to assist the Trojans, but was killed in a night commando raid. The story is told in book 10 of the *Iliad*.
- 78 *this fellow*: his penis. The narrator presumably gestured towards his own; possibly, like later comic actors, he wore a large artificial phallus.
- 92 *in Lydian*: the woman is using spells and other measures to treat the narrator for impotence. The transliteration of the Lydian phrase is uncertain, and our knowledge of the language insufficient to elucidate it.
- 104 *the Thargelia*: the festival that included the 'scapegoat' ritual. Pandora ('All-giver') is here a title of the Earth-goddess.
- 115 *Salmydessos*: a rocky, harbourless coast on the Black Sea, west of the Bosphorus, a region notorious for shipwrecks.
- 128 *Tell me, O Muse*: this fragment is a parody of the epic style.
- 129 *Bendova's isle*: the hero of the *Odyssey* spends time on the isle of Calypso; Hipponax substitutes 'Cypso', which has the indelicate meaning indicated by my rendering.